

# MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## *WHY GENDER-RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES?*



Submitted by:  
Missouri Department of Corrections  
Women's Issues Committee

Updated 3/03

# VISION

Through effective and gender-responsive programs and services, we will substantially reduce the number of incarcerated women offenders. Persons with substance abuse and mental health disorders will receive gender-specific and culturally competent treatment interventions in community settings. Women recidivism will be minimal and women will lead productive and peaceful lives, raising healthy children, obtaining gainful employment, and making positive contributions to their safe communities.

# MISSION

The Missouri Department of Corrections is committed to providing gender-responsive environments to women offenders under our jurisdiction. The Department of Corrections will offer a full continuum of gender-specific services to empower women to reach their full human potential. Through inter-divisional collaboration, we will work to prepare women to lead productive and crime free lives.

## GENDER-RESPONSIVE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- ✧ A theoretical perspective that incorporates women's pathways into the criminal justice system.
- ✧ Safe, supportive, and nurturing women-centered environment that encourages trust, bonding, and connection.
- ✧ Programmatic approaches based on theory/theories that fit the physiological, psychological, and social needs of women.
- ✧ A strength or asset based approach to treatment and skill building.
- ✧ Staff that reflect the client population in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, ex-offender, and recovery status and possess the needed competencies to foster gender-sensitive environments.
- ✧ Utilization of gender-responsive assessment tools and individualized treatment plans that match appropriate treatment with the identified needs/assets of each client.
- ✧ Gender-responsive and culturally competent in service staff training.
- ✧ Linkages to community based agencies such as sober housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, 12-step support groups, child welfare, domestic violence, parenting, childcare, peer support groups, health, mental health, HIV/AIDS, day treatment, and other aftercare.
- ✧ Positive gender-responsive workplace.

- ✧ Therapeutic modalities/approaches (relational) that address issues such as recovery from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, family relationships, substance abuse, eating disorders, co-occurring disorders, assertiveness skills, and learning how to structure leisure time.
- ✧ Opportunities to develop skills in a range of educational and vocational areas.
- ✧ Female role models and mentors that reflect the racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the clients.
- ✧ Utilization of bilingual program materials.
- ✧ An emphasis on activities that focus on empowerment, self-respect, and self-efficacy.
- ✧ Education and counseling relating to health (pregnancy, nutrition, stress management, HIV/AIDS, STD's), mental health (PTSD, depression), smoking cessation, exercise, and meal preparation.
- ✧ Emphasis on parenting education, child development, and relationships/reunification with children.
- ✧ Child friendly environments with age appropriate activities designed for children.

-Source: "Gender-Specific Programming for Female Offenders: What is it and Why is it Important?" B. Bloom and S. Covington, ASC, 1998.

## STATISTICS

### MISSOURI

- ✧ Since 1992, Missouri women under the Department of Corrections supervision has increased 93%. Women offenders have more than doubled since 1990.
- ✧ The number of women sentenced by courts to the Department of Corrections increased 37% from FY92 to FY2000.
- ✧ Success rates in Missouri for women in substance abuse treatment and supervision programs averages 15% higher than males.
- ✧ At the end of FY2002, 15,900 women were under the Department of Corrections supervision:

2,322 incarcerated  
11,605 on probation  
1,477 on parole  
496 interstate transfers

### UNITED STATES

- ✧ In the last 10 years, arrest rates increased 32% but imprisonment rates have increased 159% for women offenders.
- ✧ In the U.S., drug offenses account for 50% of women in prison.
- ✧ Women in U.S. prisons are three times more likely to have an abuse history than male prisoners.
- ✧ Women under supervision and in correctional agencies were mothers of an estimated 1.3 million children. Incarcerated

women are mothers to 233,600 children. Of this amount, 80% of women have at least one child under the age of 18.

- ✧ Women are less likely to be convicted of violent crimes or use weapons, less likely to present significant danger in the community, and less likely to be “kingpin”.
- ✧ Since 1990, the number of women convicted of felonies has increased at twice the rate of males.
- ✧ Higher cost to community and prison systems by incarcerating women.

-Sources: Female State Offender Profile (MO) by Planning, Research and Development  
Joann Belknap, Associate Professor, Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Colorado  
Stephanie Covington, Ph.D., LCSW

## FACTS REGARDING THE WOMAN OFFENDER

### RELATIONSHIPS:

- ✧ Programs for women are more successful if the focus is on relationships with others and how to master their lives while keeping the relationship intact.
- ✧ Women focus on connectedness and interdependence. Men focus on independence and autonomy.
- ✧ To women, relationships are central. To men, rules and status are central.
- ✧ Women are more likely to be the principal caretaker of children at the time of arrest than are men.
- ✧ Women are more likely to have been the subordinate member of a coercive relationship with a male in the course of committing a crime.

### PATHWAYS TO CRIME:

- ✧ Women's poverty directly impacts the children.
- ✧ Women are less aggressive and less status in criminal enterprise.
- ✧ There are distinct health needs for the women offenders.
- ✧ There are high levels of sexual, emotional and physical abuse of women, and thus more extensive health and mental health needs.

- ✧ Women are more likely to be victims of abuse. Empowering women offenders necessitates gender-responsive programs to help women enhance self-esteem, increase assertiveness, and reduce the chances of victimization.
- ✧ Women are more likely to seek and be open to medical and psychological treatment.
- ✧ Women receive fewer conduct violations, including Possession/Use of an Intoxicating Substance.
- ✧ Women work to avoid isolation. Men are more uncomfortable with intimacy.
- ✧ The typical incarcerated woman is of ethnic minority, young, low socio-economic status, single mother, convicted of non-violent crimes, and has a substantial substance abuse history.



## STRATEGIC ISSUE #1

**OBJECTIVE:** To address pertinent issues within the Department of Corrections relating to women offenders within the Division of Adult Institutions.

- ✧ Strategy: Evaluate the current screening and assessment instruments for gender-responsiveness.
  - Utilize NIC Technical Assistance
  - Develop and submit recommendations to Executive staff
- ✧ Strategy: Ensure gender-specific programming and practices within the women's institutions.
  - Review and improve current programming offered to incarcerated women
  - Review and revise offender visiting policy and procedure to assist in maintaining the bond between mothers and children
  - Implement gender-specific state issued uniforms for women

## STRATEGIC ISSUE #2

**OBJECTIVE:** Review and revise policy and procedure to address gender-specific areas.

✧ Strategy: Obtain executive staff support and approval.

- Presentation skills needed knowledge of policy and procedure
- Coordinate with Compliance Unit
- Identify policy and procedure committees
- Review other states policies and procedures regarding women offenders

✧ Strategy: Prioritize specific policies and procedures for review, development, and revision.

- Sexual Misconduct policy:  
Appoint committee to address and define  
Implement brochure for staff and offenders
- Address current statute, propose legislative amendment
- Examine for effectiveness and gender sensitivity

✧ Strategy: Review and revise existing policies and procedures to address the woman offender.

- Review other states with gender-specific policies
- Incorporate into the Department of Corrections policy and procedure

## STRATEGIC ISSUE #3

**OBJECTIVE:** Develop and implement a comprehensive staff training program.

✧ Strategy: Gain support from Executive staff and Training Academy.

- Ability to defend crucial role of staff training
- Review current training on women offenders
- Review other states training curriculum

✧ Strategy: Review Department of Corrections training curriculum for gender-responsiveness.

- Revise current training if necessary or add to the current training pertinent information not included
- NIC consultation

✧ Strategy: Implement training for pertinent staff in all divisions.

- Budget constraints identified
- Training of trainers
- Identify resources and materials needed
- NIC participation

## STRATEGIC ISSUE #4

**OBJECTIVE:** Establish community partnerships and provide gender-responsive services to women under supervision.

✧ Strategy: Identify current and potential partnerships.

- Knowledge of all state agencies and their function
- How can they benefit the Department of Corrections
- Use current partnerships as stakeholders

✧ Strategy: Review and implement programming to meet the needs of women offenders in the community.

- Information networking with staff and offenders
- Track existing and potential partnerships
- Evaluate existing programs for effectiveness

✧ Strategy: Evaluate the current screening and assessment instruments for gender-responsiveness.

- Utilize NIC technical assistance
- Develop and submit recommendations to Executive Staff

Quote from Missouri Governor Bob Holden, July 9, 2001

“Too often, women who come to prison are overwhelmed by issues of low self-esteem, the stigma and shame of incarcerations, separation from their children, and histories of abuse. Women carrying these psychological burdens are prone to violent behavior and suicidal tendencies that make supervision even more difficult without the proper staff training and programs.

All of these factors mean we need different programming and gender-specific staff training to improve our chances of rehabilitation for women. Those different needs can best be met by a program specifically designed to address women’s issues in prison – and with my signature on this bill today, MISSOURI WILL HAVE SUCH A PROGRAM.”